DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 539 EC 306 973

AUTHOR	Gutierrez, Mary Kate
TITLE	Transition Planning: A Team Effort. NICHCY Transition Summary, TS10.
INSTITUTION	National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, Washington, DC.; Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-01-00
NOTE	25p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013; Tel: 800-695-0285 (V/TTY) (Toll-Free); Tel: 202-884-8200 (V/TTY); e-mail: nichcy@aed.org; Web site: http://www.nichcy.org
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; *Agency Cooperation; Community Programs; *Disabilities; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Planning; *Individualized Education Programs; Rehabilitation Programs; Secondary Education; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Individualized Transition Plans

ABSTRACT

This summary on transition planning provides ideas and information on how students, families, school personnel, service providers, and others can work together to help students with a disability make a smooth transition after leaving high school. It focuses on creative transition planning and services that use all the resources that exist in communities, not just the agencies that have traditionally been involved. This publication also provides: (1) definitions of some terms used in transition planning; (2) lists of individuals and agencies that can help the Individualized Education Program Team create a successful transition plan; (3) guides to finding the groups and agencies that provide transition services; (4) examples of creative transition plans; and (5) ways to improve the transition system by working at the community level. The four ways in which people can interact to establish or improve services and plan for young adults preparing for transition from school to post-school activities are described and include networking, service coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. A transition services phone interview guide is included to help providers find out about services that other agencies may offer. (Contains a list of 19 organizations and 36 transition publications.) (CR)

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NICHCY

ED 426 539

EC 306 173

TS10, January 1999

TRANSITION SUMMARY

A publication of the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities

Transition Planning: A Team Effort

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The completion of high school is the beginning of adult life. Entitlement to public education ends, and young people and their families are faced with many options and decisions about the future. The most common choices for the future are pursuing vocational training or further academic education, getting a job, and living independently.

For students with disabilities, these choices may be more complex and may require a great deal of planning. Planning the transition from school to adult life begins, at the latest, during high school. In fact, transition planning is required, by law, to start once a student reaches 14 years of age, or younger, if appropriate. This transition planning becomes formalized as part of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Transition services are intended to prepare students to make the transition from the world of school to the world of adulthood. In planning what type of transition services a student needs to prepare for adulthood, the IEP Team considers areas such as postsecondary education or vocational training, employment, independent living, and community participation. The transition services themselves are a coordinated set of activities that are based on the student's needs and that take into account his or her preferences and interests. Transition services can include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school

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adult living objectives, and (if appropriate) the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational assessment.

The student and his or her family are expected to take an active role in preparing the student to take responsibility for his or her own life once school is finished. Where once school provided a centralized source of education, guidance, transportation, and even recreation, after students leave school, they will need to organize their own lives and needs and navigate among an array of adult service providers and federal, state, and local programs. This can be a daunting task—one for which the student and his or her family need to be prepared.

This ***Transition Summary*** provides ideas and information on how students, families, school personnel, service providers, and others can work together to help students make a smooth transition. In particular, this document focuses on creative transition planning and services that use *all* the resources that exist in communities, not just the agencies that have traditionally been involved. This publication also provides:

- ✧ definitions of some terms used in transition planning,
- ✧ lists of individuals and agencies that can help the IEP Team create a successful transition plan,
- ✧ guides to finding the groups and agencies that provide transition services,
- ✧ examples of creative transition plans, and
- ✧ ways to improve the transition system by working at the community level.

A Brief Legal Overview* of Transition Planning

If students are to mature into independent, productive adults and become increasingly responsible for their actions and accomplishments, they need to acquire the skills that are of value in the world of adulthood. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) acknowledges this and contains provisions meant to encourage student involvement and shared decision making.

Since 1990, transition services have been a requirement of law for students who are 16 years or older, or younger if deemed appropriate by the IEP Team. The services are planned at the IEP meeting to which students must be invited. Thus, the 1990 IDEA legislation provided students with an enormous new opportunity to be involved in planning their own education, to look into the future, to voice their preferences and concerns and desires, to be heard, to share in making decisions that so directly affect them.

Now, under the latest reauthorization of the IDEA in 1997 (IDEA 97), this involvement has been expanded. In addition to transition services beginning at age 16, a statement of transition service needs is required at age 14. At this time, and updated annually thereafter, the IEP Team looks at the child's courses of study (such as advanced placement courses or vocational education programs) and determines whether or not those courses of study are leading the student to where the student needs to be upon graduation. What other courses might be indicated, given the student's goals for life after secondary school? Beginning to plan at age 14, with an eye to necessary coursework, is expected to help students plan and prepare educationally. Then, at age 16, or younger if appropriate, transition services are delivered in a wide range of areas.

In addition to transition services beginning at age 16, a statement of transition service needs is required at age 14.

IDEA 97 has also outlined procedures for the transfer of parental rights to the student when he or she reaches the age of majority under State law. Both the parents and the student must be notified of any transfer of rights that will take place at that time. Students are to receive the notification at least one year before they reach

* This legal overview was taken directly from the approved OSEP IDEA 97 Training Package, Module 9, pp. 9-11 through 9-13. This document is available from NICHCY.

the age of majority. A statement must be included in the IEP that the student has been informed of the rights, if any, that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority. After the student attains the age of majority, if rights transfer, the school must provide any notice required by the law (e.g., procedural safeguards notice, notice regarding an upcoming IEP meeting) to both the student and the parents. In states where rights transfer, all other rights accorded to the parents transfer to the student. (If the student is determined incompetent under state law, then the rights remain with the parents.)

Many students, however, may not have the ability to provide informed consent with respect to their educational program, although they have not been determined under state law to be incompetent. To protect the interests of these children, IDEA 97 provides that each state that transfers rights needs to establish procedures for appointing the parents (or another appropriate individual, if the parents are not available) to represent the student's educational interests.

This transfer of rights is obviously an enormous step forward toward empowering students as adults and encouraging them to inform themselves about and become deeply involved in their education and particularly in planning for their future. Educators will need to provide additional training and opportunities for students to understand the impact of this responsibility.

Transition Teams

This section looks at ways to create effective transition teams. Collaboration between team members and participating agencies is an essential part of the process [see box below entitled *What is Collaboration?*].

Individual Transition Team Members

Many different individuals come together to help the student plan for transition. Typically, transition planning is handled by members of the IEP Team, with other individuals becoming involved as needed. It's important to involve a variety of people, for they will bring their unique perspectives to the planning table. The team draws upon the expertise of the different members and pools their information to make decisions or recommendations for the student.

Who are some of the individuals who may be part of the

What is Collaboration?

There are basically four ways in which people can interact to *establish or improve services and plan* for young adults preparing for transition from school to post-school activities. Let us look at these methods briefly.

Through **networking**, people gain an awareness of available resources and discover how to access or refer individuals to those services. An example of networking might be a transition coordinator *talking* with local business owners to identify possible job training sites for students. While networking is an essential step in collaboration, it will not be enough for students who have complex transition service needs.

Service **coordination** assists in the selection and scheduling of services. In coordinating, people *arrange* for a student with disabilities to receive specific services from different agencies (for example, one agency making a phone call to another agency to determine their respective roles and to schedule activities).

With **cooperation**, people look for ways to *support and complement* one another's transition services. For example, an adult services agency may accept a student's recent test results from his or her school to determine the student's eligibility for services. This would prevent the student from being tested twice and would save the adult services agency time and expense.

Collaboration begins with networking, coordination, and cooperation and then requires team members to *share decisions, responsibility, and trust*. It requires that team members invest time and energy to come up with options and design strategies for carrying out these plans. Because collaboration requires lots of time and energy, it is impossible to make all decisions collaboratively. In some instances, the desired result can be achieved through networking, coordination, or cooperation. Working together, or collaboratively, invites participation of multiple service providers and the use of multiple resources. See the *Student Stories* on pages 8, 10, and 12 for examples of collaboration in action.

transition team? Naturally, the student and his or her family are core members of the team. They keep the whole team grounded and focused on the goals and on finding services and developing a plan that will benefit the youth with disabilities. When the purpose of the IEP meeting is to discuss transition, the student must be invited to attend. If there is no way he or she can come to the meeting, then the school must take other steps to make sure that the student's preferences and interests are considered in the plan that is developed.

Other members of the team include those normally on the IEP Team (special education and general education teachers, related service providers, administrators, and others as appropriate), plus transition specialists, who may be well informed about resources and adult services in the community.

In addition, representatives that have traditionally provided post-high-school services should be involved (see box at right, **Common Community Agencies and the Transition Services They May Offer**). This may include:

- The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agency: The VR agency has traditionally been a primary player in determining the way transition services are delivered. VR has its own eligibility requirements. Therefore, not all students receiving special education services can receive VR services.

(continued on page 6)

Common Community

Agency/Program*
(Purpose & Funding Source)

Vocational Rehabilitation Agency assists persons with cognitive, sensory, physical, or emotional disabilities to attain employment and increased independence. Funded by Federal and state money, VR agencies typically operate regional and local offices. VR services typically last for a limited period of time and are based on an individual's rehabilitation plan. If needed, an individual with disabilities can request services at a later time, and a new rehabilitation plan will be developed.

Mental Health & Mental Retardation Agencies provide a comprehensive system of services responsive to the needs of individuals with mental illness or mental retardation. Federal, state, and local funding are used to operate regional offices; local funding is often the primary source. Services are provided on a sliding payment scale.

Independent Living Centers help people with disabilities to achieve and maintain self-sufficient lives within the community. Operated locally, ILCs serve a particular region. ILCs may charge for classes, but advocacy services are typically available at no cost.

Social Security Administration operates the federally funded program that provides benefits for people of any age who are unable to do substantial work and have a severe mental or physical disability. Several programs are offered for people with disabilities, including Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Plans to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Medicaid, and Medicare.

* Names of agencies or programs may differ slightly from state to state.

Agencies and the Transition Services They May Offer

Examples of Employment Services	Examples of Postsecondary Education Services	Examples of Adult and Independent Living Services
• vocational guidance and counseling • medical, psychological, vocational, and other types of assessments to determine vocational potential • job development, placement, and follow-up services • rehabilitation, technological services and adaptive devices, tools, equipment, and supplies	• apprenticeship programs, usually in conjunction with Departments of Labor • vocational training • college training towards a vocational goal as part of an eligible student's financial aid package	• housing or transportation supports needed to maintain employment • interpreter services • orientation and mobility services
• supported and sheltered employment • competitive employment support for those who need minimal assistance		• case management services to access and obtain local services • therapeutic recreation, including day activities, clubs, and programs • respite care • residential services (group homes and supervised apartments)
• information and referral services • connecting students with mentors with disabilities	• advocacy training • connecting students with mentors with disabilities	• advocacy training • auxiliary social services (e.g., maintaining a list of personal care attendants) • peer counseling services • housing assistance • training in skills of independent living (attendant management, housing, transportation, career development) • information and referral services • connecting with mentors
Work incentive programs which may include: • cash benefits while working (e.g., student-earned income) • Medicare or Medicaid while working • help with any extra work expenses the individual has as a result of the disability • assistance to start a new line of work	• financial incentives for further education and training	• medical benefits • can use income as basis for purchase or rental of housing

- Service agencies for students with mental retardation or mental health concerns such as the Mental Health Agency: Depending on the student's individual needs, it may be important for the transition team to include representatives from service agencies addressing mental retardation or mental health. The services provided by these agencies, however, vary greatly from community to community due to differences in local funding and priorities.

- Independent living centers (ILCs): ILCs are non-residential, community-based agencies that are run by people with various disabilities. ILC services vary from place to place.

- Social Security Administration: Social Security Administration programs provide financial assistance or work incentives to eligible people with disabilities based upon federal guidelines.

Other individuals or agencies may serve as one-time or ongoing consultants to the team, sharing a particular expertise or insight, while others may be valuable sources of specific information that helps the team plan and make decisions (see **Potential Consultants to the Transition Team** on page 7). Consider the useful information to be gained from any of the following:

- Postsecondary education and training providers such as representatives from colleges, or trade schools, who can help the student explore types of training available as well as remind the group that lifelong learning for all individuals is important;

- Department of Labor job services agencies, which offer transition services and employment programs, although not usually with a disability focus;

- School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) program representatives, who can tell the team about job training available under STWOA to help students prepare for their first job or further education and training;

- Community leaders such as religious leaders, directors of recreation programs, and county extension agents, who may help the team address a particular need that a student has;

- Community recreation centers such as Boys Clubs, YMCA, or 4-H Clubs, which may provide job counseling and youth development activities; and

- Employers, who can provide training and job opportunities and who can explain the expectations that the business community has for future workers.

Team members do not necessarily have to come from social service agencies. Students and their families may also invite a relative, friend, or advocate who can provide emotional support, access to their personal networks, or other unique expertise. If possible, it is also helpful to have team members from similar language and cultural backgrounds as the student. These members can help the team understand how cultural or language issues impact the transition process. Some typical transition outcomes, such as going away to college, getting a paying job, moving out of the family home, and making decisions independently of the family are valued differently by different cultures.

It is very important to invite service representatives and other individuals identified as transition consultants to IEP meetings that will be focused on *only* transition. They do not need to be at every IEP meeting of the student. If they cannot attend the meetings focusing on transition, talk to them about the IEP and bring their ideas or comments to the meeting.

Potential Consultants to the Transition Team

Potential Consultant	Relationship to Transition Services
Adult Education Representative	provides information about lifelong education options
Advocacy Organization(s) Representative	may offer self-advocacy training or support groups for young adults
Assistive Technology Representative	provides expertise on devices that can open doors to opportunities
At-Risk/Prevention Specialist	offers counseling and support on teen pregnancy, alcohol, and drugs
Business-Education Partnership Rep.	provides links between schools and local businesses and industry
Community Action Agency Representative	may link team to resources for traditionally underrepresented groups
Correctional Education Staff	provides incarcerated youth with continued learning opportunities
Drop-Out Prevention Representative	provides youth with alternatives to dropping out of school
Employer	offers insight into expectations; promotes hiring of people with disabilities
Employment Specialist	provides job development, placement, coaching
Extension Service Agent	offers programs in parenting, homemaking, independent living
Guidance Counselor	provides information on curriculum, assessment, graduation requirements, college
Health Department/School Nurse	provides guidance on community health services and health care advice
Higher Education Representative	provides information on postsecondary services to students with disabilities
Housing Agency Representative	assists in developing housing options
Leisure Program Representative	knows available program options within the community
Literacy Council Representative	coordinates volunteers to teach basic reading and writing skills
Local Government Representative	funds many local services; can provide information on local services
Local Disability Representative (e.g., UCP)	provides information and training (often serves all disabilities, not just one)
Parent Training Information Center Rep.	provides training on transition planning and advocacy services to families
Religious Community Member	can provide social support to young adults and their families
Residential Service Provider	can help access specialized housing
Social Worker	provides guidance and arranges for case management, support, respite care
Special Olympics Representative	provides sports training, competition, and recreational opportunities for youth
Therapists	provide behavioral, physical, occupational, & speech services in the community
Transportation Representative	offers expertise about transportation options and training
United Way Representative	funds many community programs that may offer options for young adults
Very Special Arts Representative	provides information on art programs and opportunities for youth
Vocational Educator	provides job training; teaches work-related skills
YMCA/YWCA	offers recreation and leisure programs

Creating the Transition Plan

After the IEP Team identifies the student's preferences and interests and identifies the agencies and resources that may be helpful in planning the student's transition, it's time to sit down and figure out a way to make all the pieces fit together. This takes time, creativity, and patience, but the rewards are worth the effort. Remember that other people have done this before. Consult school professionals, disability groups, parent organizations, and other families for their suggestions.

Planning an effective transition can involve many different individuals and agencies. The three *Student Stories* on pages 8-13 illustrate the types of collaboration involved in creative planning. They show plans for three different components that every transition plan should include—plans for employment, plans for education and/or training after high school, and plans for living independently. Following these *Student Stories* are tables **(Planning for Employment, Planning for Education After High School**, and **Planning for Living Independently)**, that show the steps that a transition team may need to take in order to meet the student's goals.

Marcia's Employment Path

Marcia, a 20-year-old student with mild cognitive disabilities and a mild hearing impairment, has a transition goal of full-time employment upon graduation this year. Marcia has a one-year-old child. Marcia's transition planning team includes her and her family, the vocational educator, special educator, vocational rehabilitation counselor, mental retardation case worker, hearing specialist, social worker, and occupational therapist.

Starting at age 17, Marcia had begun exploring job opportunities through job shadowing and internship experiences. Both Marcia and her parents reported that she likes working with people, that she likes working inside, and that she would prefer an office setting. Marcia's vocational education teacher observed her in a simulated work experience and reported that Marcia followed instructions when given visual cues from a co-worker. The vocational educator and vocational rehabilitation counselor identified a small business that needed office assistance. Marcia, working with the vocational rehabilitation counselor and her special education teacher, set up a job interview at the small business and was successful at obtaining a part-time job as an administrative aide.

The counselor/special educator team observed the work setting and identified the work and social demands of the job. The IEP transition team identified that Marcia would need the following supports to work: visual cues outlining the steps of the job; co-worker to assure safety (for example, in an emergency); monitoring for errors; a flashing light on the telephone; transportation training; and child care for her son. The special educator and rehabilitation counselor provided training to the employer and other employees who, in turn, agreed to provide the natural supports Marcia needed and develop the visual clues for the steps of the job.

The occupational therapist and the family developed a plan for Marcia to learn how to travel using the city buses. The social worker identified a good low-cost child care setting, and the Department of Social Services agreed to cost-share these services with Marcia (who receives SSI) until one year after graduation. The social worker also agreed to coordinate Marcia's participation in a parenting class offered by the Health Department. The IEP Team recommended a consultation with a representative from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide guidance on benefits and the use of any work incentives.

The local school agreed to provide a job coach initially, and the Department of Mental Retardation Services agreed to pick up this cost six months prior to graduation. The rehabilitation counselor, who specializes in working with students with hearing impairments, agreed to act as job monitor for this placement and to follow up with Adult Education or the Literacy Council for Marcia's continued education options. The rehabilitation counselor continued to work with Marcia, and by the time she exited school Marcia had secured a full-time position at the business.

Planning for Employment

What Does This Student Need?	Actions the High School Transition Team May Recommend
ASSESSMENT that identifies current strengths, needs, interests, and preferences for post-school employment, independent living, and postsecondary training and/or education	✓ interview youth regarding vocational interests and preferences (use other methods to assess interests and preferences of nonverbal students) ✓ conduct situational assessment (observation in a work setting) to assess endurance, strength, aptitude, social skills, interests, interactions ✓ conduct formal vocational evaluation by a trained evaluator ✓ self-assessment ✓ develop student's awareness of different jobs ✓ discuss health care issues that may impact employment
DEVELOPMENT of job and job placement options and awareness of skills needed	✓ analyze local labor market (contact employment services for state and request information for the region; contact local vocational advisory council; contact local chamber of commerce; review local want ads; contact employment agencies) to identify job openings and local labor needs ✓ get a range of work experiences: explorations, job shadowing, mentoring, and internships ✓ identify community programs offering job placement or training ✓ build network of employer and community program contacts ✓ provide training to employers on issues related to employees with disabilities
MATCHING of student and job	✓ analyze the demands and expectations of the job site (e.g., duties, skill requirements, hours, location, transportation, wages, benefits, social skills) ✓ list the supports the student needs to be successful on the job ✓ match the student's assessment and the list of needed supports to the job demands, including transportation to the job ✓ identify current gaps and needs for success ✓ identify needed natural supports, job accommodations, adaptive equipment, and support services
School- and Work-based TRAINING & PREPARATION	✓ provide instruction to youth on job-seeking skills ✓ provide community-based work experiences related to career development ✓ identify potential service providers ✓ provide natural supports and accommodations ✓ provide instruction and training (pre-employment or on-the-job)
PLACEMENT and FOLLOW-ALONG	✓ work with employer to determine employee's response to the job demands and identify strategies to capitalize on strengths and minimize limitations ✓ provide natural supports and accommodations ✓ monitor progress and readiness for job advancement ✓ monitor changing need for natural supports ✓ make adjustments, as needed

Carlos's Plan for College

Carlos, a 16-year-old junior in high school with a significant learning disability, plans to attend college upon graduation. Carlos loves working with computers and demonstrates skill and interest in using computers for graphic design. (Carlos's team includes him and his family, guidance counselor, independent living center representative, postsecondary education support services provider, and a student with a learning disability who had graduated two years ago and is currently attending college.)

Since Carlos is interested in pursuing a career involving computers, but is still undecided about what he would like to major in, the guidance counselor provided a list of colleges that offer a variety of computer-related degrees, including graphic design, programming, and management information systems. Carlos agreed to attend the local College Fair, and his family agreed to take him to visit campuses and observe and inquire regarding the support Carlos may need.

The team agreed that, in order to be successful in college, Carlos would need a college that offered small class size, student mentoring services, and note-taking services. The team agreed that Carlos had depended on others to advocate for him. They recommended that Carlos improve his self-advocacy skills. The representative from the Center for Independent Living invited Carlos to participate in their next self-advocacy program as a means of meeting this transition service need, and the school division agreed to pay for the costs of this service.

The postsecondary service provider told Carlos, his family, and the other professionals that a local college was offering an orientation for new students which would give Carlos a flavor for the demands of the college setting. Funding for this was possibly available from the local advocacy group representing individuals with learning disabilities. The special educator reported that the advocacy group was looking for individuals to apply to their program. The guidance counselor set up an appointment with the family, to discuss options for college financial assistance.

Planning for Education After High School

What Does This Student Need?	Actions the High School Transition Team May Recommend
ASSESSMENT that identifies strengths, needs, interests, preferences for postsecondary education	✓ assess student's self-advocacy skills, academic preparation, and college bound test scores ✓ assess student's technical skills, social skills, independent living skills ✓ interview youth regarding educational setting interests and preferences—size, setting, programs (use other methods to assess interests and preferences if student is nonverbal) ✓ identify youth's long-term career goals ✓ develop a list of supports student needs to achieve postsecondary education goals ✓ discuss health care issues that may impact student in postsecondary setting ✓ identify needed natural supports, academic or physical accommodations, and support services
DEVELOPMENT of postsecondary education options	✓ visit campuses ✓ participate in college night ✓ have college students with disabilities talk to youth ✓ research colleges and universities that offer special services to students with disabilities ✓ discuss financial issues ✓ discuss preferred location of college
MATCHING of student and postsecondary education setting	✓ analyze the demands and expectations of the postsecondary education setting—accessibility, support services availability, academic rigor, social culture, independent living setting ✓ match the student's assessment and list of needed supports to the demands of the postsecondary education setting
PREPARATION for postsecondary education	✓ provide developmental academic support and coursework needed to prepare for postsecondary education goals ✓ assist youth with applications, interviews, and test preparation ✓ identify potential service providers ✓ develop natural supports ✓ provide self-advocacy training
PLACEMENT and FOLLOW-ALONG	✓ monitor progress in the postsecondary setting ✓ monitor changing need for natural supports ✓ monitor changing need for services ✓ advocate for changes and adjustments, as needed

Mark's Independence

Mark, a 20-year-old youth with mental retardation, will be finishing high school next year. Mark has long expressed a strong desire to live independently after leaving high school. His older brother has his own apartment, and Mark associates living on his own with being an adult. Living independently is part of Mark's transition plan, which also includes employment and attending a community recreation program for adults with disabilities.

Two years ago Mark's family, working on the advice of the other IEP Team members, put him on a waiting list to be matched with other individuals who are looking for housing. Over the past three years, the IEP Team has worked on improving Mark's advocacy and independent living skills. Mark's family contacted the local Arc and was able to connect with a mentor to help Mark strengthen his self-advocacy skills. The occupational therapist at school focused on improving the critical living skills Mark needed to live on his own.

At the beginning of this school year, Mark's family contacted the county agency that serves adults with disabilities. The agency assigned a service coordinator (sometimes called a case manager) to work with Mark and his IEP Team. The service coordinator, along with the IEP Team, determined the level and types of support Mark needed, and arranged for the necessary supports he needed to keep a job and live with others. The IEP Team, including Mark's family and the service coordinator, determined that Mark could live with individuals with other disabilities in a house or apartment on a cost-share basis as long as he received daily assistance. A residential support person would visit Mark every day to monitor that his needs were being met, to help with finances and nutrition, and to set up recreational activities.

Mark also would need training on how to use city transit system, so he could travel independently from home to job and the community recreation center. His IEP Team established an IEP goal for Mark to learn how to use public transportation. The Department of Rehabilitative Services counselor reported that rehabilitation services could assist Mark in purchasing the assistive devices he will need on the job. The service coordinator agreed to monitor Mark's integration into the community over the year following graduation.

Planning for Living Independently

What Does This Student Need?	Actions the High School Transition Team May Recommend
ASSESSMENT that identifies strengths, needs, interests, preferences for adult and independent living, including recreation and leisure	✓ interview youth and family regarding adult and independent living interests and preferences (use other methods to assess interests and preferences if student is nonverbal) ✓ observe youth in independent living or recreational setting ✓ interview youth and family regarding medical needs ✓ interview youth and family regarding financial plans ✓ identify transportation skills and needs ✓ develop a list of supports student needs to be successful ✓ identify needed natural supports, accommodations, and support services
DEVELOPMENT of adult living placement options, including recreation and leisure (not needed immediately, but for planning purposes)	✓ analyze adult living options in the local area (for example, group homes, supported living homes, roommates) ✓ analyze locality for leisure/recreation options in the local area ✓ coordinate with other families and youth looking for adult living options ✓ provide training and education for families and youth regarding living and financial options for transition-aged youth ✓ analyze community for transportation options
MATCH youth to adult living placement options, including recreation and leisure	✓ analyze the demands and expectations of the adult living and community participation options ✓ match the student's assessment and list of supports to the demands and expectations of these options
TRAINING and PREPARATION for adult living	✓ provide instruction to prepare youth to enter identified adult living and community options ✓ identify potential service providers for needed supports and accommodations ✓ develop natural supports ✓ provide opportunities to participate in the community in the identified settings
PLACEMENT and FOLLOW-ALONG	✓ monitor progress ✓ monitor changing need for natural supports ✓ monitor changing need for services ✓ make adjustments, as needed

How to Find Resources in Your Community

Creating a dynamic transition plan like the three described above on pages 8-13 is not easy. Keep in mind that in many places needed services have long waiting lists or are simply unavailable. Unlike school services, adult services are not mandated by federal law. Transition team members must keep digging, networking broadly, and thinking creatively in order to help each young adult live as productively, independently, and happily as possible. Knowing a wide range of possible contributors will be the key to creating a collaborative transition plan with supports tailored to an individual's needs.

Your school district should have much information on transition services that are typically used, such as transportation services and housing. Team members should talk with special education teachers and administrators, as well as parents who have already gone through the transition process with their son or daughter. Team members can then focus their efforts on personalizing and supplementing with other nontraditional services and resources to meet the student's transition goals. It is important that transition teams look beyond familiar agencies and services when exploring supports for individuals with disabilities. But the team must also be selective and choose supports that reflect the individual student's needs.

Sometimes, finding transition services or options resembles detective work. Transition team members, especially the parents, students, and special educators, may need to make phone calls to agencies and organizations and take notes. The white, blue, and yellow pages of the local phone book are a good tool for discovering transition resources. **Let Your Fingers Do the Walking in Transition Planning** on page 15 provides some helpful hints on how to find possible service providers or programs.

Knowing a wide range of possible contributors will be the key to creating a collaborative transition plan with supports tailored to an individual's needs.

Modern technology can enhance planning. For example, local libraries have information on local government, and many now have computers with Internet access. Increasingly, agencies and organizations use Web sites and e-mail to find and share information. Some of the terms listed on page 15 may also be useful in key word searches on the World Wide Web.

Part of transition planning involves collecting information from the community to use for both immediate needs and anticipated needs. However, sometimes making a "cold" phone call to get information can be intimidating. See the **Transition Services Phone Interview Guide** on page 16 for some ideas on how to gather information.

Some state disability rights agencies provide information and referral services. National information services, such as the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) and the National Transition Alliance, offer Web sites to provide users with easy access to information (see "Organizations," page 20). Every state has a parent training and information center, known as the PTI, where people can call to get information on agencies and services within their state. PTIs also offer training in transition planning, as do other major disability groups such as the Arc, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), Centers for Independent Living, and others.

Let Your Fingers Do the Walking in Transition Planning

White Pages

The Table of Contents may include references such as "Community Service Numbers" or "Disabilities, Services for Individuals with."

Some of the headings you will find that might relate to the varying service needs of youth with disabilities include:

Adult Protection
Disabilities Services
Education
Employment
Financial Aid
Handicapped/Disabled
Housing
Human Rights
Human Services
Mental Health & Mental Retardation
Recreational/Social Development
Rehabilitation
Social Security Administration
Social Services
Transportation
Volunteer Opportunities

Blue Pages

Local, state, and federal government listings can always be found in the Blue Pages of the phone book.

Local Listings might have some of the following headings:

Employment Opportunities & Information
Housing
Human Resource Management
Mayor's Office on Disability
Social Services

State Listings might have some of the following headings:

Children
Clinics
Education
Health Services
Housing
Labor
Libraries
Museums & Theaters
Social Services

Local, State and Federal Government Listings will include numbers for all state and government agencies. Examples of these would be:

Employment Commission
Medicaid
Mental Health
Mental Retardation
Rehabilitation Services
Social Services
Transitional Living Center
Transportation Department
Vocational Evaluation Center

Yellow Pages

Check out the Index of commonly used terms. Using key words, here are a few examples of what you might find:

Disability: Access Unlimited; Adult Care Services; Assisted Living; Charter's Mobility Center; Paradapt Services

Associations: Arc; Boy Scouts; Families for Children with Mental Health Concerns; Information & Referral-United Way; Learning Disabilities Council; Neighborhood Housing Services

Mental Health: Alliance for the Mentally Ill

Transition Services Phone Interview Guide

When you are starting your cold calling and search for service providers, start with agencies that can refer you to other organizations, such as Vocational Rehabilitation or an Independent Living Center.

Name of Organization
Name of Person You Spoke with
Position
Address

Phone Number Fax Number Date Contacted

Sample phone script:

"Hello, this is _____. I am a *(teacher, parent, family member, administrator, coordinator)* of a youth *(young adult)* who is" *[OR if you are the student, then "I am"]* _____ *(exploring career options, exploring where to live after graduation, interested in a recreational program,* or whatever fits your ultimate goals*)*. I am looking for information to help in planning for my *(own, son's, daughter's, family member's, student's)* future. I found your organization through _____ *(another agency, the yellow pages, a publication)* and I am interested in learning more about what services you provide *(or what your organization does)*. Could you tell me who in your organization I should talk to about this? Thank you.

Please tell me about your agency/organization. Who do you serve? What services do you offer?

How does one get involved with your agency/organization? Are there special eligibility or admission requirements? How does one apply?

Are there costs involved in participating in your agency's or organization's programs? If so, how much are they? Do you offer special rates?

Do you have any ideas about how your agency or organization might help meet a need such as: *[Describe a "specific problem or need" that you might have, for example: youth has a visual disability and needs assistance changing buses; youth has physical disability and is interested in playing a sport; teen parent with a learning disability needs child care so that she can go to work after school; and so forth.]*

Could you refer me to some other people, agencies, or organizations that might offer some services to meet this need?

Do you have any written materials describing your agency *(or organization)*? If so, could you please send them to me _____ *[your name]* at _____ *[your address]*. Thank you for speaking with me today. This information is very helpful in planning my *(own, student's, son's, daughter's)* future as a member of our community. Best wishes for fulfilling your agency's *(or organization's)* mission.

Community Level Transition Teams

While many people are involved in helping improve transition services for students at an individual level, there is a movement to improve the transition system at the community level. Many states have created community groups that help with planning at the local level. They may be called by different names, such as "community transition team," "interagency community council," or "local transition advisory group." No matter what they're called, these teams usually include representatives from disability-related agencies and the community who come together with the mission of improving the transition of young adults with disabilities from school to adult life. The idea behind developing these community transition teams has been that they are operated locally and therefore are able to:

- ✧ share resources and funding,
- ✧ hold information fairs,
- ✧ try out new ways of serving youths and young adults, and
- ✧ help change or influence policies and procedures.

Transition teams can be a strong force within the community. Their primary purpose is to assess how a community's transition services system works and to develop policies and procedures to make this system work better. They can identify the best ways to meet the needs of youth with disabilities leaving the local schools within their community. They can promote actions through school boards and other governmental entities in areas such as policy and funding.

To find out if your community has a transition team and how you can get involved, contact your:

- ✧ Local school or school district's department of special education: Ask to talk to the person in charge of the transition of students with disabilities in the district.
- ✧ Parent Training and Information Center (PTI): If you don't know how to get in touch with your state's PTI, call NICHCY for the number.
- ✧ State Transition Systems-Change Project: Call the National Transition Alliance or National Transition Network (see "Organizations," page 20).

If a community-level transition team does not already exist in your area, you can take steps to create one. When participating agencies and the community at large support community transition teams, they have the potential to create a well-connected, culturally diverse, and very responsive transition services system. Here are some steps you can take to get a community transition team started:

- ✧ Find out what your community is already doing. Assess the range of transition services going on in your school and community by talking with school professionals, parents, and community and parent groups.
- ✧ Identify areas that need improvement. Decide what transition services are lacking and which of the these service gaps you want to address.
- ✧ Make a plan. Talk with school professionals, parents, community and parent groups, and others about ways to address these service gaps (e.g., starting a career development center at school, holding information meetings, doing research on other communities' transition systems).
- ✧ Measure your success. Agree on what you will use to determine if your efforts are successful (e.g., every student will be involved in at least three job shadowing

Community transition teams can identify the best ways to meet the needs of youth with disabilities leaving the local schools within their community.

experiences, the school district will hold two transition information fairs each year).

See the Publications section on page 21 for more resources on starting teams.

Conclusion: Taking the First Steps

To improve transition results for young people with disabilities, individual transition team members and community transition team members must work creatively. Many services exist in every community. If transition team members cultivate relationships with these resources and combine successful teamwork methods with the services available in their community, they will be able to create dynamic individual plans. Here are some starting steps.

Students:

- Write down your long-term goals and what you think you need to do to reach these.
- Read your IEP and transition plan and decide if the plan is being implemented.
- Tell your teachers you want to lead your own IEP meeting and ask them to help you learn what to do.
- Learn about your civil rights under the law, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Learn about your disability, how to explain to people

your strengths, and how to ask for reasonable accommodations.

- Practice job interviews and/or asking for accommodations.
- Talk with your doctor and parents about your health care needs so you will be ready to take responsibility for them.
- Ask your teacher how to get involved with your community's transition team.

Family Members:

- Observe your son or daughter's independent living skills, work behaviors, social involvement, dreams, and hopes.
- Call your child's teachers and ask that transition services, including financial planning, be addressed at your next meeting.
- Help your child learn about his or her disability and how to ask for the supports he or she needs.
- Give your child responsibility for chores at home.
- Role play different situations with your child (e.g., interviews).
- Discuss your child's medical needs with him or her and facilitate discussions with your doctor.
- Introduce your child to adult role models with disabilities.
- Look in your phone book and Yellow Pages and identify three new possible resources to help your son or daughter's transition to adult activities.

School or Agency Administrators:

- Evaluate transition services in your system.
- Look into establishing or strengthening your community transition team.
- Make a phone call to develop a new community agency contact.
- Find some funding to share across agencies or for service development.
- Set up a meeting with staff members to learn each person's expertise in transition.
- Develop a cooperative agreement with another agency specifying how to coordinate transition.
- Encourage your staff to be creative in problem solving.

Special Educators:

- Talk to students and families about transition services.

- ✧ Ask to attend a conference, workshop, or other learning opportunity related to transition.
- ✧ Teach students about their civil rights under the law, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- ✧ Pledge to conduct collaborative, needs-based IEP meetings that empower youth and families.
- ✧ Provide youth with step-by-step activities that familiarize them with the IEP process and prepare them to take active roles.
- ✧ Call the local rehabilitation counselor or mental retardation case manager and coordinate a meeting.
- ✧ Use the Transition Services Phone Interview Guide in this publication (page 16) and call one community agency or resource.

Vocational Educators/ Educators:

- ✧ Contact a special educator and find out when IEPs are scheduled for your current or future students.
- ✧ Offer to provide a tour of your program and share your knowledge and expertise in job competencies, job development, and job placement.
- ✧ Identify one student receiving special education services and work with him or her to provide vocational counseling to help define realistic career goals.
- ✧ Develop a plan to coordinate your work-study program with all the special education community-based work programs.

Guidance Counselors:

- ✧ Create a workshop for students on self-advocacy skills that would promote success in postsecondary education or employment settings.
- ✧ Ask to attend a workshop, inservice, or other training to learn about community agencies and resources.
- ✧ Ask a college representative about services for students with disabilities.

Community Agency Service Providers:

- ✧ Attend a workshop, inservice, or other training to learn about community agencies and resources.
- ✧ Develop a folder that contains some of the wealth of information you have about community resources and how to access them, and share with IEP Team members, transition councils, families, students, and administrators.
- ✧ Identify three things that could help you actively participate in the IEP process when appropriate, and share these with the high school administrator or special educator/transition specialist.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors:

- ✧ Schedule regular office hours at schools that you work with.
- ✧ Support activities and use of assistive technology for students in high school that result in employment.
- ✧ Serve on a local transition committee.
- ✧ Share your knowledge of the job market and job assessments.

Any of the Above:

- ✧ Identify two ways you can add to the collaborative transition planning process; share this with administrators, special educators/ transition specialists, or other service providers.
- ✧ Offer to take the lead to develop a community transition resource directory for your community.
- ✧ Most of all, take any one proactive step in your community towards collaborative transition planning and observe the results.

You can work to improve the system of transition services both at the individual level and in your community. It's worth it!

Organizations

Alliance for Technology Access (ATA), 2175 East Francisco Blvd., Suite L, San Rafael, CA 94939. Telephone: (415) 455-4575.
E-mail: atainfo@ataccess.org
URL: http://www.ataccess.org

Americans with Disabilities Act Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs). Telephone: 1-800-949-4232. (The DBTACs provide information, referral, TA, and training on the ADA.)

The ARC National Employment & Training Program, 500 East Border, Suite 300, Arlington, TX 76010. Telephone: 1-800-433-5255; (817) 277-0553 (TTY). URL: http://www.thearc.org/

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221-0192. Telephone: (614) 488-4972 (Voice/TTY). E-mail: ahead@postbox.acs.ohio-state.edu URL: http://www.ahead.org

Easter Seals National Headquarters, 230 W. Monroe, Suite 1800, Chicago, IL 60606.
Telephone: (312) 726-6200; 1-800-221-6827.
E-mail: webmaster@seals.com
URL: www.easter-seals.org

Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Career Development and Transition, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1589. Telephone: (703) 620-3660; (703) 264-9446 (TTY). URL: http://www.cec.sped.org/

HEATH Resource Center (National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities), One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036-1193. Telephone: 1-800-544-3284; (202) 939-9320. E-mail: heath@ace.nche.edu URL: http://www.acenet.edu/programs/HEATH/home.html

Job Accommodation Network (JAN), 918 Chestnut Ridge Road, Suite 1, P.O. Box 6080, Morgantown, WV 26506-6080. Telephone: 1-800-526-7234; (304) 293-7186 (Voice/TTY).
E-mail: jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu
URL: http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu

Mobility International USA (MIUSA), P.O. Box 10767, Eugene, OR 97440. Telephone: (541) 343-1284 (Voice/TTY). E-mail: info@miusa.org

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), 1916 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 209, Arlington, VA 22201. Telephone: (703) 525-3406; (703) 525-4153 (TTY).
E-mail: neil@tsbbs08.tnet.com

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: 1-800-695-0285; (202) 884-8200 (Voice/TTY).
E-mail: nichcy@aed.org
URL: http://www.nichcy.org

National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC), 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3319. Telephone: 1-800-346-2742; (301) 588-9284; (301) 495-5626 (TTY).
E-mail: naric@capaccess.org
URL: http://www.cais.com/naric

National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities, Transition Research Institute, University of Illinois, 113 Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820. Telephone: (217) 333-2325. E-mail: nta@aed.org
URL: http://www.dssc.org/nta

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, 1331 F Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20004. Telephone: (202) 376-6200; (202) 376-6205 (TTY). E-mail: info@pcepd.gov URL: http://www.pcepd.gov

Project ACTION, 700 Thirteenth Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone: 1-800-659-6428; (202) 347-3066.
E-mail: project_action@nessdc.org
URL: http://www.projectaction.org

Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas, 4089 Dole Building, Lawrence, KS 66045-2930. Telephone: (913) 864-4095 (Voice/TTY).
E-mail: rtcil@kuhub.cc.ukans.edu
URL: http://www.lsi.ukans.edu/rtcil/rtcil.htm

School-to-Work Learning and Information Center, 400 Virginia Avenue SW, Suite 150, Washington, DC 20024. Telephone: 1-800-251-7236. E-mail: stw-lc@ed.gov URL: http://www.stw.ed.gov/index.htm

Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers, PACER Center, 4826 Chicago Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55417-1098. Telephone: 1-888-248-0822, (612) 827-2966; (612) 827-7770 (TTY). E-mail: alliance@taalliance.org URL: http://www.taalliance.org/

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1801 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20507. Telephone: 1-800-669-4000; (202) 663-4900 (TTY). URL: http://www.eeoc.gov

More Organizations

If you want more information about national and/or disability-specific organizations, call NICHCY at 1-800-695-0285.

You can also visit our Web site (www.nichcy.org) and search our online Organization Database.

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Student's Guide to Jobs, 1998

Technical Assistance Guide: Helping Students Develop Their IEPs, 1995

Technical Assistance Guide: Helping Students with Cognitive Disabilities Find and Keep a Job, 1999

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Visit NICHCY's Web site (www.nichcy.org) for free on-line copies of these publications.

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About NICHCY

NICHCY, the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, is a clearinghouse that provides information on disabilities and disability-related issues. Our special focus is children and youth with disabilities, birth to age 22. In addition to our publications, we offer a number of services: personal responses to questions; referrals to other organizations and agencies; information searches of our databases and library; technical assistance to parent and professional groups; and a terrific Web site (www.nichcy.org). Anyone may contact NICHCY for information.

NICHCY ***Transition Summaries*** are published to highlight issues of importance to the transition needs of young people with disabilities. NICHCY also disseminates other materials and can respond to individual requests for information. For further information or assistance, or to receive a NICHCY *Publications Catalog*, contact NICHCY, P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: 1-800-695-0285 (Voice/TTY) and (202) 884-8200 (Voice/TTY). You can e-mail us (nichcy@aed.org) or visit our Web site (www.nichcy.org), where you will find all of our publications.

NICHCY thanks our Project Officer, Dr. Peggy Cvach, at the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education. We would also like to thank the other individuals who reviewed this document: Marlene Simon, Ph.D., Associate Division Director, Secondary Transition/Postsecondary Team, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education; Suzanne Butcher, parent; Jane Everson, Ph.D., Human Development Center; Barbara Guy, Ph.D., National Transition Network; Richard Horne, Ed.D., National Transition Alliance; Julie Kistler, special educator; Jane Johnson, PACER Center; and, Deborah Leuchovius, PACER Center. We would also like to express our great appreciation to the author, Sharon deFur, for sharing her expertise which made this publication possible.

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A Special Thank You...

This publication would not be complete without a special thank you to David Houchins, for the valuable research he contributed to this publication.

Academy for Educational Development

Publication of this document is made possible through Cooperative Agreement #H326N980002 between the Academy for Educational Development and the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.